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Proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005

Introduction

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I. Submission

1. This medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 has been prepared in compliance with the revised provisions of article IV of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (hereinafter referred to as the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning). The proposed plan is hereby submitted to the General Assembly.

II. Challenges for the period 2002-2005

2. The phenomenon of globalization presents the single most important set of challenges facing the Organization in the years ahead. The successful management of change in our global world calls for effective responses to ensure that the benefits of globalization may be secured while minimizing and ameliorating the associated risks and problems. While globalization and interdependence are opening new opportunities through trade, investment and capital flows and advancements in technology for the growth of the world economy, and for development and improvement of living standards around the world, there are associated risks of marginalization. Such risks are the result not only of change in itself, but also of the speed with which changes are brought about by globalization. In addition, transboundary problems have been accentuated with globalization, as reflected in crime, narcotics, terrorism, pollution, disease, armaments, refugees and migrants. The Organization must respond to these growing challenges using both the benefits of new technology and better mechanisms to ensure effective collective responses.

3. Globalization is drawing further attention to the persistent problems of extreme poverty and inequality, the unsustainability of current patterns of development and the diverse complex of difficulties faced by Africa. In many cases, emerging and persistent problems, and the combination thereof, prove to be not only global but also multidimensional. The broad range of challenges covers peace and security, and humanitarian, developmental, environmental, social and human rights issues which are intricately interconnected and therefore call for solutions that involve the same level of complexity in responses. This creates a true organizational challenge for the international community to ensure that institutional responses are effectively planned and implemented.

III. Policy orientation and strategy

4. The Organization's response to the broad range of challenges to be faced in the plan period will call for an action-oriented approach at both the intergovernmental level and, in support of this, at the Secretariat level. Effective planning will be at a premium to ensure an integrated approach which will depend heavily upon mutually reinforcing contributions from the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat. In this light, the medium-term plan offers an opportunity for reflection before choices among the various types of action possible are made, for assessing what is feasible and for deriving from this assessment objectives that are both feasible and politically acceptable to Member States.

5. In the light of the changing nature of security problems, with more intrastate as opposed to inter-State conflicts, special attention will have to be placed on developing coherent, comprehensive approaches to crises. In the field of peace and security, the programmes for political affairs, disarmament and peacekeeping will aim at ensuring fewer conflicts and peaceful settlement of those that do arise, working in tandem with the humanitarian and human rights programmes in their efforts to ensure respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, and to protect civilians from violations of that law. Post-conflict situations will call for peacekeeping operations, for effective programmes to ensure smooth transitions from humanitarian relief to reconstruction and development, as well as for special political missions in support of peace-building activities including, where relevant and requested, electoral assistance. The growing incidence and increasing impact of natural disasters will also require dedicated attention, both with respect to prevention and mitigation and with respect to humanitarian response and post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery. All of these situations will demand closer coordination of both intergovernmental and Secretariat actors.

6. In the economic and social spheres, both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council may be expected to continue addressing trade, development, technology, finance, gender, poverty, population, environment and human rights issues, especially in their relation to globalization.* Follow-up action to the high-level international intergovernmental event on financing for development envisaged for 2001, may be expected to provide impetus for better handling of globalization and related developmental issues in the coming years. Similarly, action to be taken under the General Assembly agenda item entitled "Globalization and interdependence" can also be expected to provide further guidance as to how the Organization will proceed in this field. In the proposed medium-term plan continuing work is foreseen for the regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to assist with the integration of developing countries and countries with economies in transition into the world economy.

7. The medium-term plan reflects an increased awareness of the need to be gender sensitive when designing programmes, projects and activities. There is recognition that the work of the Organization may have a different impact on different target groups, including both women and men. The majority of programmes address gender questions. Some of these reflect a conscious effort to demonstrate gender sensitivity in the approach to be taken in the implementation of the programme as a whole. In other programmes, the question of gender mainstreaming has been identified for work related to statistics and data collection, research and analysis, formulation of policy options, post-conflict peace-building, deployment strategies in peacekeeping operations, advocacy strategies, training and technical cooperation. In those cases, the interests, experiences, priorities and needs of both women and men have been taken into account as an integral part of the design of the subprogrammes, thereby facilitating the eventual design of the activities to be implemented at the operational level of the programme budgets.

8. A common theme across most programmes is the intent to make best use of technological developments to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization's activities. While the common support services programme highlights the development of a long-term strategy for information technology, the intention to apply modern technology is common to all programmes. A number of programmes already make extensive use of the Internet, including the public information programme, and the humanitarian programme, which has developed ReliefWeb as a major humanitarian coordination tool.

IV. Methodology and format of the proposed medium-term plan

9. The medium-term plan constitutes the foundation of the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycle of the United Nations. As a translation of legislative mandates into programmes and subprogrammes, the plan provides the principal policy directive of the United Nations. The medium-term plan also serves as a framework for the formulation of the biennial programme budgets within the plan period and for the evaluation of programmes.

10. This proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 follows the format requirements set out in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, as revised by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/207 of 18 December 1998. Most of these requirements are not new. Nevertheless, while most components had been included in the revised medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, they were not applied consistently throughout the plan, nor were they separately identified as such. The present proposed medium-term plan seeks to improve the presentation of programmes by maintaining consistency in the structure of the programmes and by introducing more coherence in formulating the required components, in full compliance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning.

11. Concerns expressed by Member States confirm the widely perceived need to be informed about the effectiveness and impact of the Organization's work, and the current deficiencies of the programme planning cycle in meeting that need. Shortcomings in distinguishing true objectives from activities at the planning stage have resulted in difficulties in assessing the degree of implementation of the programmes and the achievements of the Organization.

* The General Assembly, at the first part of its fifty-fourth session, adopted 20 resolutions that linked these issues with the phenomenon of globalization. Two of them, resolutions 54/165 and 54/231, focused on globalization.

12. This proposed medium-term plan and the improvements in its presentation are an effort to overcome those difficulties and to provide, through more coherence and consistency in the programme formulation stage, a more focused road map and a solid foundation for evaluation and feedback. Its purpose is to facilitate discussion by Member States on the overall direction of programmes at the policy level, rather than on detailed activities of each department at the implementation level. To optimize the use of the medium-term plan in the programme planning cycle of the United Nations, further skills in programming and in performance management need to be developed, and the Secretary-General intends to reinforce staff training in these areas.

13. Each programme is introduced by a section describing its overall orientation, which covers its objectives and the strategy to be followed at the programme level. For each subprogramme, the proposed medium-term plan describes the objectives, its strategy, the expected accomplishments, and indicators of achievement. An attempt has been made to capture the essence of each programme and subprogramme with respect to the *raison d'être* of the work undertaken by the Organization. The formulation of the components outlined below has been kept simple and succinct.

14. These components have not been formulated in isolation from each other, but are in fact part of a conceptual framework that shows a causal relationship among each of them. Objectives constitute the foundation for programme design. The strategy explains how those objectives can be attained through implementation of certain types of activities. Expected accomplishments, included for the first time in a medium-term plan pursuant to recent revisions to the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, meet the need for specificity, and can be conceived of as concrete benefits that result from pursuing the objective. Indicators of achievement should be closely linked to the expected accomplishments in order to provide information on whether these expectations have been met. Each of these components is described more fully below.

Objective

15. The objectives express the overall desired achievement of each programme and subprogramme. They have been formulated as being designed to bring about observable change, rather than as a description of an ongoing activity, while keeping in mind the different nature of servicing and substantive activities. In keeping with regulation 4.2, objectives are derived from the policy orientations and goals set by the intergovernmental organs.

16. Efforts have also been made to formulate the objectives at the level of the Organization as a whole, rather than at the level of intergovernmental action or action by the Secretariat only. Responsibility for programme implementation is neither the exclusive preserve of Member States (individually or in intergovernmental organs) nor of the Secretariat. It is a collective responsibility, and success in achieving objectives and in producing expected accomplishments as measured by indicators of achievement will in part be a measure of the degree of success of the international community working in a harmonized partnership between Member States and the Secretariat.

Strategy

17. The strategy describes the approach that will be taken to achieve the objective. It is not a detailed listing of activities or outputs, but rather a description of the course of action or the type of activities that will be undertaken. Strategies are designed on the assumption that, external factors allowing, the selected types of activities would lead to the fulfilment of the objective.

18. Strategies will generally involve one or more of the following types of activities: increasing awareness and understanding, undertaking research and analyses, setting norms and promoting compliance, facilitating negotiations and providing a forum for dialogue, advocacy, and technical cooperation.

Expected accomplishments

19. Expected accomplishments are the only truly new component in programme planning as it affects the medium-term plan, and have been included pursuant to the revisions to regulation 4.5 adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 54/236 on the basis of the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-ninth session.

20. New subparagraph (c) under rule 105.4 (which is intended to give further guidance in the implementation of regulation 4.5) defines expected accomplishments in relation to other concepts, namely by describing them

as those benefits or changes expected to accrue to users or beneficiaries through the delivery of final outputs, and by providing that the expected accomplishments should be in conformity with, and lead to the fulfilment of, the objectives established in the programmes and subprogrammes. Expected accomplishments are therefore intended to meet the need for more specificity in the orientation of the Organization.

21. In the present medium-term plan, the expected accomplishments have been formulated in a way that would facilitate the subsequent assessment of progress made towards them. The tool for making such an assessment would be the indicators of achievement.

22. While there may be many expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement, a selection has been made of those that are representative of the programmes and subprogrammes.

Indicators of achievement

23. In relation to the achievement of objectives, rule 104.7 requires that indicators of achievement be given where possible. The present medium-term plan contains proposed indicators of achievement for all subprogrammes.

24. Since the expected accomplishments set forth concrete and specific expectations, and are therefore more suited for subsequent measurement, indicators of achievement are generally aligned with expected accomplishments rather than the objectives.

25. The formulation of indicators of achievement is not a new requirement under the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning. Nevertheless, implementation of this request has remained dormant, as previous medium-term plans did not systematically establish measures for performance assessment. The proposed indicators are a first step in using indicators as an operational tool and could be used as a basis for developing indicators applicable to the programme budget.

V. Priorities for the period 2002-2005

26. The persistent problems and challenges of the future identified in the current plan period will continue to be both valid and relevant to the Organization over the next four-year period. Accordingly, no change in the priority areas identified in the revised medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 seems required at this point. The Secretary-General therefore proposes that the following areas of work be given priority in the period 2002-2005:

(a) Maintenance of international peace and security;

(b) Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences;

(c) Development of Africa;

(d) Promotion of human rights;

(e) Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts;

(f) Promotion of justice and international law;

(g) Disarmament;

(h) Drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.